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INTERVIEW

‘A Singular Gesture’: Zachary Thomas Dodson on the Potential of Design in Fiction

May 2, 2018

Zachary Thomas Dodson is an American book designer who is particularly interested in exploring the visual possibilities of narrative. He is the co-founder of the Chicago-based press Featherproof Books (2005) and the author of *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel* (2015) in addition to an earlier novel, *Boring Boring Boring Boring Boring Boring Boring* (2008), under the pseudonym Zach Plague.

In this interview, Dodson discusses the role of design in literary production and highlights the potential of typography, page layout, and non-verbal elements such as maps to constitute integral parts of a literary narrative. Relating his work to earlier as well as to contemporary instances of visual experimentation with narrative, Dodson

comments on his inspirations and influences while manifesting promising paths for literary production and the publishing industry. In the second part of the interview, Dodson discusses the intricacies and challenges of working on *Bats of the Republic* as both author and designer, and reveals his intentions with regard to his next book project.

T.M. You identify yourself primarily as a book designer, and then as an author. Is design fundamentally attractive for you as a concept, or as a practice?

Z.T.D. I feel like they are pretty closely tied, and I think that has to do with the nature of design itself. I am tempted to say it feels more conceptual to me, because what I often do, is I think of writing as part of the design process rather than vice versa, but, you know, kind of in a blended way. There was a scholarⁱ who said that design represents a third area of knowledge; if science is how things work, how the world works, and humanity is what things mean, you kind of separate design and say it's a third area of knowledge: it's the function and the meaning tied together in one. I usually identify myself as a book designer just because I am more comfortable with that name, and more comfortable with those skills. As a writer I have great insecurity, and so it's just easier to say I'm a designer; it seems more believable when I am trying to fool people.

T.M. And it seems more natural to you, you have a sense of belonging in that professional domain, apart from the notion of comfort that you mentioned.

Z.T.D. I teach graphic design, so that's the world I am in, and that's my job as a professor. But I probably feel more comfortable in the world of writing, among other writers, easier for me to talk to. I have more in common, I am more interested in what other writers are doing than in what other designers are doing. But then I think that's where my own natural ability is, design is just easier for me. I can make something quickly, I can feel happy about it, I feel like I understand it, and writing is always very difficult. I am never quite happy, and I am not sure I have done a good job, and it wasn't like I wanted it, these struggles.

T.M. So, in what ways do you think that book design can become ingrained into the narrative of a novel? You have explored some of these ways in *Bats of the Republic* (Dodson 2015), but I would like some of your more general views on this.

Z.T.D. I think it's always there, whether it's intended or not. There is this famous design essay about the crystal goblet.ⁱⁱ I don't subscribe to that theory, I think there is no crystal goblet. I think that if you are drinking out of a crystal goblet, you notice it's a crystal goblet that you are drinking out of, right? So, the typography, the layout, the format of the book always has some influence on how it is received. Even if it's very subtle, even if it's very small or unnoticed by the writer, book designer or reader, I think it's always there subconsciously. And knowing that it's there, how could you not pay attention to it when you are making a book, and why would you ignore it also in making a book? Like I said, I don't think there is this crystal goblet; I don't think there is a neutral typeface. Every typeface has history, has a certain form, and for me speaks in a certain voice. So, a little bit - not in the sense that you do when you are writing, but a little tiny bit - you choose a voice when you choose a typeface, and some subtle or unconscious thing transfers to the reader through that.

T.M. Do you view your work as being part of a larger trend in contemporary literature?

I am thinking of multimodal novels, for instance, and my follow-up question to this just in case you want to respond to them together, is whether you consider yourself being in dialogue with - not necessarily belonging to - a body of authors that experiment with the viscosity of the narrative, e.g. Mark Z. Danielewski, Jonathan Safran Foer, Reif Larsen, J.J. Abrams and Doug Dorst . . .

Z.T.D. I don't know if it's enough to call it a trend, but I wish a lot more people were trying to do this because I think that there is a lot to be explored. I am very curious about other people who are using design in their novels and their fiction, so I seek them out, and try and read as many of them as I can. Because if you get down to it, each one is kind of a pretty different experiment.

T.M. Indeed. So, have you been perhaps inspired or affected by some of these works or some of these authors?

Z.T.D. Certainly, yes. And even beyond that, I would say I try to steal tricks from as many of them as I can, you know. Most of my favourite books are the ones that I am inspired by, are just regular books without these hybrid stuff, and then most design or artists that I am really inspired by, are doing something else. I got a Master's degree at School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and Stephen Farrell teaches there, who designed *VAS*. So, he was my instructor, and he even worked with me on *Bats*, he read it and gave feedback on the design. His book was really inspirational to me, and his feedback was really valuable to me, and I think that book represents a really high level of what could be done in this field. But then even other tricks: there is a 1930s mystery author, Dennis Wheatley, and his book *Murder off Miami* has a sealed ending; the solution to the crime is in a sealed thing in the end that you are not supposed to open -

so there is a trick that I just borrowed from him, I really liked that sealed ending kind of feeling.

T.M. So, in your view, how does design relate not only to the verbal aspect of the narrative, but to other elements that can perhaps be visually exploited such as typography, photographic images, maps? I was wondering how you perceive the interaction of design with these elements, these areas.

Z.T.D. I suppose each of those is a separate question. I have already said a little something about design. Photography - what's the name of that guy who has all the photography in his novels . . .

T.M. W.G. Sebald?

Z.T.D. Sebald yeah. So, I think for him the photo was very much a part of writing; it was just another way to say something, and they were inserted with the text. So that's interesting but I think for everyone it's a little different. I think photos and illustrations become part of the story when they are not merely illustrations, when they tell something different that's not contained in the text. I think the easiest example of that is children's books. I have a three-year-old son, so I've been reading a lot of children's books, and this is the best kind of easy study of words and pictures together. There are children's books that say a sentence and the illustrator made a literal drawing of that sentence, and then there are much subtler, better children's books that have a sentence, and the drawing is different - or subverts the sentence, or gives more information, or turns the sentence into a joke, or plays with the language. They are speaking to each other and they are in dialogue or in cahoots in a way, so that's much more interesting. And I think design can also stage a text through typography, but also through things like margins or page layout that can give you a sense of what kind of text it is, if it's important or not. Or there are all these design-encoded languages that we just pick up

from culture, and they can also pace things - kind of control the pace that you get in a narrative, and I am interested in that as well. Because there are other mediums of storytelling; in film, time is obviously a major element but even in graphic novels the author seems to have a little more control over pace, so I am interested in that too.

T.M. What do you think the relation between book design and typography, or book design and photography, book design and maps within fiction is? Is it a tool for, maybe, uncovering or creating a different kind of capacity for these methods of representation, or something else?

Z.T.D. I think it's exploring the potential of the form more fully. I think maps are a great example. So much information can be layered into maps, maps come with their own narrative to begin with, it's kind of a good example because in so many books that are otherwise just text. In fantasy or sci-fi novels, maps are pretty common; there they serve a kind of world-building, or verisimilitude, which makes it more real. They can add all sorts of layers that text can't.

T.M. Thank you for that. So, for a book designer, what is the space of a print book? Do you view it as a blank palette, as a space of possibilities, as a stage potentially, based on what you said?

Z.T.D. I think I view it as a complete space. I really think the whole thing should be in the designer's hands. Of course, the way the publishing industry now works is, the writer writes the text and the editor edits it and somebody puts the kind of paratext around it and the book designer comes in and does whatever type design for the pages. Many times in the big publishing houses the designer doesn't read the book because they've got so many to layout; and they do a cover which really functions more like a miniature billboard on the shelf, rather than an integral part of the book. And I like a cover that you could go back and learn more about what you just read - looking at the

cover again and reading into it, because I think the whole thing becomes an experience. When you really love a book like the books you read when you were a kid - the books that you read that changed your thinking as a teenager or a young adult - you kind of become obsessed with the object too. The cover, the paper, and the size, they really become part of it, I think. There is one book that I designed for Featherproof, *The Karaoke Singer's Guide to Self-Defense* (2011) by Tim Kinsella, who now runs Featherproof, a small press that I started. He really wanted it to look like one of those 1970s mass market paperbacks, like *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* which had a distinct yellowing vibe, and so we really tried to capture that old '70s paperback vibe.

In general, my philosophy at Featherproof was in design trying to make a book more like itself, to amplify its personality and to amplify its ideas, and to make it more like it was. So, I worked really closely with the authors to do that, and there is no part of those designs that they are not involved in, because the author knows best what it is, and so they know if it's right or not. In most publishing houses those decisions are made by marketing departments or design departments separate from the author. In terms also of what the book design space is, I view it as something like the author bio, which in most books is a short little bit on the back flap which you get about an author. In the books that you love the best, the books that change your life, you read the author bio, and it says: 'so and so, lives in Santa Barbara with her two dogs.' And you think, 'what does that mean, and how does that connect to what I just read, and which characters are the dogs?' Your brain wants to put it together, you are looking for more information. So, in my book I even play with that a little bit, I like the idea that the narrative bleeds into the other parts of the book, and back and forth, and I think that's interesting.

T.M. Some of the earliest practices in book-making involved the illuminated manuscripts of the medieval age. Do you view these as having some kind of impact on your work? Or do you draw maybe some inspiration from some of those very early practices of an illustrator and an author working together?

Z.T.D. I have looked at a lot of those things, and they do fascinate me as examples of text and image together, and there are interesting techniques in a lot of old illuminated manuscripts and how they would combine text and images. I find those alternate techniques really fascinating - the same with the Egyptian style of hieroglyphs and drawings or the Mayan codices, how close drawing and writing were for them, and they would exist in the same plane. I call *Bats of the Republic* 'an illuminated novel,' and I borrowed that term from Warren Lehrer who has made a few books in this genre, but I don't really connect it to illuminated manuscripts.

I think I am still looking for a good name for this genre or thing. I don't know what you call them, but there doesn't seem to be a solid name. What's interesting about those illuminated manuscripts too, relates to the scribes who drew them and wrote them, which was a very rarified set of skills. I think the reason that a lot of manuscripts had to have illustrations is because that proved that the text said what you were saying it said since nobody else could read it. They were a singular activity and a singular gesture, and I like that craftsmanship idea.

T.M. So, what are the possibilities for fiction yet to be explored, or yet to be realized?

Z.T.D. I guess that's what I am trying to do, or at least I am trying to make something I would like to see explored, or make something I would like to read. But there are so many contemporary authors who are doing amazing things, pushing fiction in all sorts of different directions right now - I mean just inside writing, and just inside the words themselves.

I don't think I am a really good prognosticator or visionary. I don't have much to say about the future, other than to repeat what I said before, which is that it would be great for me personally if more people tried some design things inside their writing, or there were more designer-and-author pairs that were doing this sort of exploration. That would be interesting to me, but I don't think it's necessary, none of this is necessary.

T.M. In this direction, will your next book project involve verbal and non-verbal narrative, or are you planning something different?

Z.T.D. Yes, it will, and I've been working on it for a couple of years now and I will probably be back at my same tricks, and maybe some new tricks I hope. I'm not sure, but definitely I will continue to have design and visual stuff in this next project that I am working on.

In terms of the future of the book, for many years people started to freak out about e-books - that they were going to come along and destroy print books, and of course that hasn't happened. It's not like music, not like MP3s destroyed albums, books seem to be hanging around. The e-book for *Bats of the Republic* - I don't know if you ever

looked at it, but don't bother. Doubleday did as best they could in the e-book format, but the e-book formats don't allow for a lot of design changes or fonts, you are kind of squeezing text into their format. They just don't allow for design. So, I was frustrated about that, because it destroyed a lot of the meaning I was trying to make with the book by cramming it into the e-book format. So with this one I started to think how could it work better in the electronic format. And if I was to set out to make something with that intention, how could I make sure that it would, that it was better, or fit, or even like I want to explore the possibilities of books still, what are the possibilities of electronic stuff. So, this project I think and I hope will be a print book, but I would also like to explore the electronic version and see what some of the capabilities are there. A lot of my reading has been around that lately - what's happening with interactive fiction, what's happening with narrative in video games, what's happening with all that stuff.

T.M. Going back to something you mentioned earlier, do you think that if more people start working in this way that this can also have implications for the publishing industry, in the sense of different artistic forces coming together rather than separate or in different stages on a project?

Z.T.D. It could, I think, in an ideal world. I think it's very difficult for a lot of people in the publishing industry to think outside of what they are used to, and also because of the processes and the workflows that they have set up. It's difficult for many reasons and difficult at every stage, there is a way in which they are not really equipped to do these kinds of books.

T.M. My second set of questions involves *Bats of the Republic*. I am prompted to ask this based on what you mentioned about e-books: what would your thoughts be on the potential for a film adaptation of *Bats*?

Z.T.D. I wrote a screenplay for *Bats*. An agent in Hollywood wanted to sell the rights and said 'it would be better to sell the rights if you write a screenplay version', and so I did, and then it never went anywhere. Maybe it still will - who knows?

It was a TV pilot instead of a film, TV seems more open at the moment to stranger stuff. But who is going to do a big-budget sci-fi and historical drama in one show? It's just too much money, too complicated, I don't have a lot of hope of seeing it on film. But it would also have to be radically different; they always change stories for film of course, and in this case I think they would have to, there are so many things like the feeling of having the unopened letter with you the whole time when you are reading.

For me that's an important part of the book and how it works, and in film or in an e-book, you don't have the sealed letter that you could or could not open at any point.

T.M. Indeed. So, how demanding or perhaps intriguing was the process of creating *Bats* for you? Being now within a process of working on a different novel, maybe it's an interesting time to look back and think of it, not while you were into the process.

Z.T.D. I think about that a lot while working on the second novel because the thought that I have again and again is that I am not going to do it like that this time: that now I know how to do it; that now I am going to do it this way, and of course that doesn't really pan out. I had a writing teacher and one of my favorite things that she said at one point was 'the reason I like writing novels is because each one is a puzzle, and a very difficult and complicated puzzle and hard to figure out and put it all together.' But doing one doesn't help you do the next one at all. You sit down for the next puzzle and you are on square one again; and as a person who jumps from project to project, I actually quite like that idea. For me it means I'll never get bored of doing it because it's always

a difficult puzzle that I don't know how to do, and I am not very good at, so it was challenging mostly in the order of the writing part.

Writing for me is challenging, the design part and the artistic part is really just fun - I really enjoy doing that. Making a map is fun, making drawings is fun, but writing the prose was just painful - hours of pulling teeth and throwing things away and being miserable, sobbing on the floor or whatever - it was not my favourite part. With *Bats*, I told myself I had to separate them - talking about how it should all be blended and this craftsman approach - I said to myself: if you write it all first, then as a reward you can go back and do these design things that are much more fun. But I wrote a lot of it, and then I couldn't help myself, I went and did some design and then I had to change the writing and then that meant that I had to change the design things, and it was just a mess. The process was just a mess. It took me maybe six years in total. So, with this one I thought I had a better plan, I would just go in and be more prepared. And I had a better plan, and I was following it, it seemed to be working out more or less, but just recently it exploded and has gotten more messy than I wanted. So, in some sense, I don't know what I am doing and it's very hard to control too, I think.

T.M. In general, you design all the material in these two novels, *Bats* and the new one?

Z.T.D. Yes, everything is drawn by me or designed by me.

T.M. Was there a particular reason that prompted you to add colour in *Bats*?

Z.T.D. I think that was inspired by *VAS* which is printed in three colours. Designers work well with limitation, and I was really impressed with what Stephen Farrell did within that limitation, so I liked having that limitation. Also there is this thread in design right now, this risograph printing and you see a lot of alternative comics and stuff like

this being printed with minimal colours and aesthetically I just like it - I like it as a constraint, what it forces you to do.

T.M. So, while working on *Bats*, did you think as an author or as a book designer?

Z.T.D. Even though I wrote it first - and I kind of saved the design as a reward or as a second part - I was always thinking about the design or picturing it in my head, or I knew how it would be. I think I did just the first draft or two in Microsoft Word but then pretty quickly took it into InDesign. And so a lot of the writing and all of the editing was done inside InDesign, with the page layout and the typeface. So, I think you are right, it's intertwined for me somehow.

T.M. Based on your experience of creating *Bats* - and you may want to contrast it with the current project you are working on - do you feel that there is an element that determines the narrative, something that potentially refuses to be compromised, or contained, or something that drives the compromises of the other part?

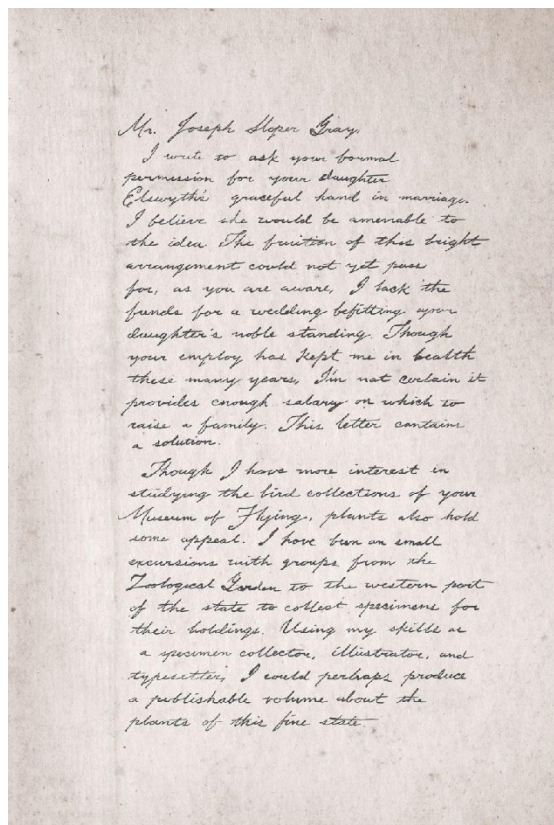
Z.T.D. Not exactly, at least not in terms of technique or practice. In terms of what drove that story, the first image for me was these bats coming out of a cave when I was a kid in Texas, and what that was like to discover. That was the central image, and the first moment for the book, and it all ended up rotating around that. But I think that's true of many writers, even the ones without visuals in their book; some moment or kind of statement sets the first note or motif for the story.



Figure 1: Zachary Thomas Dodson, *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel*, 2015.

I think I am always happy to have the design and the writing compromise, I think compromise is the interesting thing, it is the place between the two, and they rub up against each other, and it kind of sparks and makes me feel excited. When you are a designer you are trying to get things to end neatly, end in certain points on the page, and in *Bats* since I was the author too, I could write it so that each page ended perfectly at a line. And if it didn't, I could take out a sentence or add a sentence, so that was the writing taking a back seat to the design a little bit, and having to be constrained by the design. And, of course, the design is constrained by the writing but with my thinking as a designer, constraints are always useful, and always produce more interesting solutions.

T.M. In *Bats*, the reader encounters different temporalities. Is the notion of time an element you are keen on exploring and experimenting with? Was there something that led you to have this very strong sense of time and timescapes in the novel?



Mr. Joseph Sloper Gray,

I write to ask your formal permission for your daughter Elswyth's graceful hand in marriage. I believe she would be amenable to the idea. The fruition of this bright arrangement could not yet pass for, as you are aware, I lack the funds for a wedding befitting your daughter's noble standing. Though your employ has kept me in health these many years, I'm not certain it provides enough salary on which to raise a family. Allow me to propose a solution.

Though I have more interest in studying the bird collections of your Museum of Flying, plants also hold some appeal. I have been on small excursions with groups from the Zoological Garden to the western part of the state to collect specimens for their holdings. Using my skills as a specimen collector, illustrator, and typesetter, I could perhaps produce a publishable volume about the plants of this fine state.

Between the universities of Europe and the American societies, there might be enough customers for a text on the natural sciences. By proving my worth with this volume I hope to make a profession of observing the natural world. If the fates allow, the income would provide for your daughter and any children that we may have.

Our interest in books is one of the many things Elswyth and I share. Her writing is lyrical and mine is practical, and that makes a fitting match. I do not wish to be improper, sir, but my feelings for her are quite overwhelming, on an order of magnitude that I could not myself have imagined, expansive as the great western sky.

I also believe marriage could improve Elswyth's health. As you know, I've attended her bedside during her recent illness, and helped the doctor extract the black humors from her blood. Though she sleeps a great deal, my presence at her bleedings has brought us closer. She requires a husband to care for her and to lift her up in spirits.

With the most sincere respect & esteem,
Zadock Thomas

Figure 2: Zachary Thomas Dodson, *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel*, 2015.

Z.T.D. It does play with time. I am interested in time, time is so strange. When you start to really read about time, it's basically 'well we don't know what that is,' or if it exists really, it's a weird one. But I think I wasn't really trying to explore time, what I was trying to explore was a more cultural thing, a more generational thing. If I had been alive 150 years ago, would I be me? How much comes from the culture, how much comes from the historical context, how much is my DNA? So, of course I wouldn't be me exactly, but would it feel the same, or would it feel just completely different? Is being a human now the same as being a human hundreds of years ago, is it the same as being human hundreds of years in the future?

To me, it's really interesting what qualities are gained or lost or dependent on culture, or on other humans around, or on a historical moment; how much we are product of that, and how much we are truly individuals.

T.M. As the narrative develops, the reader shifts between the past and the future. What happens to the present though? Is the present potentially reserved for the reader, as a means of uncovering both?

Z.T.D. I don't know what happens to the present. There are a few moments when I show up in the book but almost as - I don't want to call it a joke, I don't think it's a joke - a kind of meta-thing. But I am not sure about the present. I was more interested in occupying a present tense for both of those characters, I was interested in Zadock's present, what that was like, and then Zeke's present, where he was.

T.M. Since the book comprises a different set of temporalities but also ephemera such as maps, images, the novel within the novel etc., would you like your readers to read your book in a particular way? Is there a way you would like the narrative experience to unfold ideally?

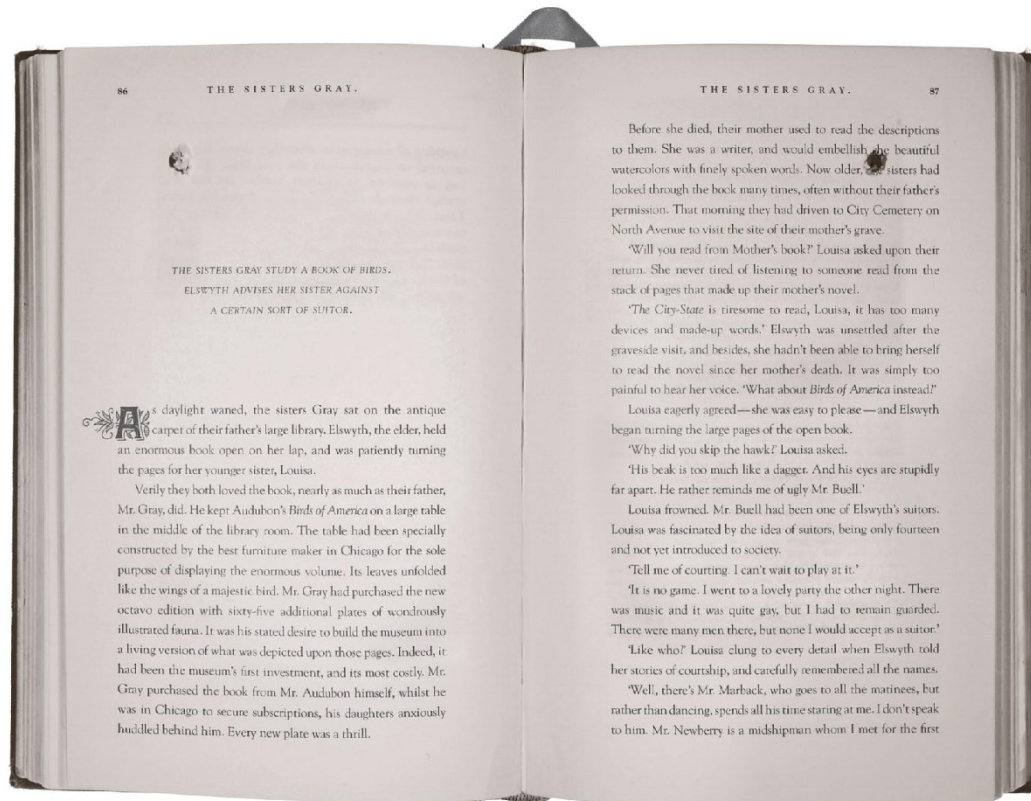


Figure 3: Zachary Thomas Dodson, *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel*, 2015.

Z.T.D. I think in the order that it's set for the most part. When I was first composing it, I had a much looser idea and I thought if a reader likes the past story they could just read the past and skip the future parts, and if they like the future they could just read that and skip the past, which I think is still true. You can do that, the story will still hold if you read them all the way through, they are not dependent on each other in that way. But probably to have the sparks and the real intention of the novel working and the real things happening, the order is prescribed. But I also really liked the idea of the

interruption of the letter. My intention is probably that you read it at the end, but that's very open to teasing the reader to read it earlier.

Everybody knows one of these readers who read the last page of the book near the beginning, or read the last ten pages of the book, because they just want to know the end before they get there. The reader always has that option, so I liked highlighting that option and bringing it up a little bit. Something that I didn't anticipate - after the book came out and I started hearing from people who read it - I started asking readers when they opened the letter, and most people probably made it to the end, but plenty of people said they got to a point and then they opened it. And for me it became an

interesting sort of anthropological study, or a character test, seeing what somebody's willpower was, or the moment that pushed somebody over.

T.M. Your response points to two of my next questions. The first is related to the existence of the material artifact in the novel, the letter, which drives the reading experience in my view as well as that of the main characters in the two timescapes. Is the letter meant to function as a means of potentially aligning character and reader experiences, by asking them to develop strategies of resistance to open the letter?

Z.T.D. It certainly could. I don't know if that was my main intention.

T.M. Coming back to something you mentioned, has the reception and critique of the book by critics or readers altered, confirmed, or presented new ways of considering *Bats* for you?

Z.T.D. Probably like every insecure writer, any praise or positive mention of the book feels fake to me and is very easy to ignore, and then every negative or cutting criticism

just cuts you right to the core, and you think about it when you're trying to sleep at night. I think that's true for many authors, so that's one way I feel about what's been said about it. Beyond that, I really appreciate it when people engage with it deeply. There were a few reviews where people really dug deep and tried to pick it apart and figure it out, and that always felt really good to me. I really wanted it to be an object that would, I hope, reward investigation; that if you went deeply into it, it would give you something back. I was always very excited to see anybody trying to puzzle it out or put it together - sometimes it would be reviews from critics, or Internet threads, or some reader would just get really deep. I really enjoyed that, and sometimes readers would have theories that I hadn't thought of, or I hadn't considered.

T.M. Have they potentially led you to, I don't want to say 'reconceive' or 'rethink' of the project, but maybe in the direction of thinking of the project as not a finite one, but as something that could continuously be perhaps explored, not only by the readers, but even by you.

Z.T.D. No, maybe not. I think that one thing that's nice about publishing a book: it's finished, and to me it feels finished. I started quite quickly to think of the next one, and for me it is a relief after six-seven years not to have to think about *Bats* anymore and figure out what it could be, or what it should be. I think I gave it my best shot. Some reviews or comments point out very correctly my feelings as a writer, and sometimes my feelings as a designer too, more often my feelings as a writer - or maybe I am just more sensitive to those ones. So it makes you want to try better. Going back and looking at it myself - which I've done very little of - I would like to do something better than that; that's the thing that drives me to the next project.

THE NIGHTMAN
 4. LIVED WITH
THE DESERTERS
ANNLYKE THOMAS
 MARRIED TO
SENATOR ZACHARY H. THOMAS
 GRANDFATHER OF
ZEKE THOMAS
 COUNSEL OF
BIC THOMAS
 BEST FRIEND OF
ELIZA
RAIBIN DEXTRA
 COURTSHIP
LEEYA
 BEST FRIEND OF
HENRY BARTLE

THE NAVARO
 FATHER TO
AUNT ANNE
 ORDER OF
LOUSIE
MAJOR M. MARROW
ZADOCK THOMAS
 STAND TO
RODRIGUEZ
 FATHER OF
ABRIEL
ELSWYTH
 WORKED WITH
JOSEPH SLOPE & GRAY
 FATHER OF
LOUISA
BARTHOLOMEW BULL
 COURTSHIP

2143
1843

Figure 4: Zachary Thomas Dodson, *Bats of the Republic: An Illuminated Novel*, 2015.

I have one more thing to say about those readers who are digging deeply into it. One thing that is exciting is there are a number of Easter eggs or repeating patterns or things that are encapsulated in the book, and many have been found but not all of them have been found.

T.M. Ok, so there is still space to explore. Thinking of the letter at the end of the book and the infinite loop where one temporality dissolves into the other, do you consider that there is a resolution in the end, or maybe that's not the point, to offer a resolution in the novel?

Z.T.D. I don't want to say too much about the ending. I think that it resolves in one sense and remains open in another sense, or that's my hope for it. I think the ending in particular seems to have hit people in different ways, and some people seem not too satisfied by it. It certainly doesn't tie up all the loose threads, but my hope is that it provides some options, prompts thinking and my hope would be that the reader would then think about what had occurred and try and piece it together or puzzle it out and decide for themselves what it meant or how the whole thing works. I don't think I have just one answer, so I hope that people will explore their own answers or their own ways of puzzling it together.

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ⁱ Dodson refers here to Herbert Alexander Simon, and in particular to his work *The Sciences of the Artificial*, originally published in 1969.

ⁱⁱ Warde, Beatrice (1955), 'The Crystal Goblet, or Printing Should Be Invisible' in Warde, Beatrice (1955), *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography*, London: Sylvan Press.